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AUTHOR Gonzalez, LaVerne
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ABSTRACT

Freshman composition calls for a teaching technique in which the content of the course is primarily student-created materials. Since by definition a writer is one who writes, a freshman writing course should simulate the professional writing process and also provide an outlet for the product. The steps in the writing process are psychological preparation, journal keeping, peer criticism, revision and editing, and publication. Contained in this document are student-produced materials and a discussion of students' involvement in courses taught as this document suggests they should be. (RB)

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González, LaVerne
English Dept.
Purdue Univ
W. Lafayette, IN 47907

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Freshman Composition: Ways and Means

TURNING ON TO WRITING

LaVerne Gonzalez

The truth is Freshman Composition can give students a "natural high" and I am hearing this year that for some students who began with me in 1970, that high helped carry them through four years at Purdue. Turning on to writing involves students and teachers in a phenomenal reciprocal high.

I believe in writing-students have been dead seas too long, absorbing never producing. I believe in the power of articulated ideas to excite and challenge. I believe Freshman Composition provides a clearing house where students learn to order ideas and respnd in writing. At a recent dedication service for the new chemistry building, the speaker lauded the twelve students of the first graduating chemistry class-not one had failed to contribute significantly to chemistry, two had won nobel prizes. The reason? Before any experiment could be performed a student must first construct the apparatus. Each student not only knew chemistry in a uniquely intimate way, but he had also learned to think inventively, to bring every faculty to bear in the achievement of his goal. Ways and means of Freshman Compostion calls for just such a thrust, i.e., the wholeness of the learning process. Primarily we create our own materials; in a sense each student becomes a vampire feeding on the blood of his own ideas.

By definition one who writes is a writer; therefore, the course simulates the professional writing process and provides an outlet for the product. Paradoxically hard writing goes into Easy Writers so Easy writing does not necessarily make damn hard reading as Jonson thought.

But what is the writing process? A multi-faceted phenomenon in which the writer behaves as a kaleidoscope, twisting and turning senses and ideas together until he and his subject fall into a tango, fitting into each other's rhythm. Broadly the catagories of the writing experience are psychological preparation, journal keeping, peer criticism, revision and editing, publication; and then the whole process begins all over again as new criticism is given.

Journal Keeping. Class journal as well as personal journal. Here the student records ideas, captures a moment, plays with words, writes a poem, soars or sinks. The journal contains the seeds of all future papers. The responsiblity of the teacher here is exposure. The beginner writer must submit himself to a variety of experiences-recording his immediate responses then deliberately determining what factors both inside and out caused his response. He digs deeply into himself at this level. The teacher begins the (See p. 2.)

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exposure process with interests emerging in the free writing. An important prerequisite emerges: the teacher must be alert, receptive, and informed. A free interexchange of ideas between all teachers involed becomes mandatory. Students will assume ethnic roles, write drama acript, demonstrate. One student wrote a drama, Oreo, which so excited her peers that they learned the parts and performed it in the Fowler Hall. One class developed an experimental film which they have set to various musical backgrounds, examining changes in their reactions. Music may often pervade the classroom. The teacher accompanies exposure to buildings-huge auditoriums, tiny pinball hang-outs, closed chemistry laboratories-with the admonition. "See with the mind, expose all the senses, feel to the very end of the fingernails." Record details sitting in a room looking out, on the ground looking around, interviewing people, observing people by climbing into their minds and writing interior monologues. Slowly the teacher enables the student to see his own mental processess and to transfer these to his writing. The mind collects an infinitude of material, catagorizes. stores it, generalizes, sends out orders to the body based on these generalizations. In the observing process the students are creating their own materials. Then as papers begin to take shape, the students who have met daily in many kinds of verbal and social exchanges read their writings to each other. Scoping ideas for further insight led a class to spend an hour outside one day discovering all the variations of the verb "walk" being demonstrated. All of the material goes into a porfolio.

Peer Criticism. Works-in-progress are submitted to three or four peers. At this point criticism begins. Early criticism notes merely response to an idea-if as the author reads he triggers a thought, the listener verbalizes it. Then packed sentences, strong use of verb, exciting metaphor, vivid comparison/contrast, unusual definition receive praise. Critics investigate possible irony or larger idea. Before any cutting away may be done, strengths emerge-the dross may then be sloughed off in the revision process. As papers continue to be submitted for peer criticism, the students begin to set the criteria for tougher criticism. The author offers a paper deemed ready for publication to a peer group whose members write on a cover sheet those places where the paper still needs work. Finally the group scrutinizes beginnings, endings, and implications of the paper. As students look thus critically at their own writing, they often begin to review critically advertisements, the rhetorical garbage used by highly emotional authors, and at last to produce sound critical writing of material included in the newspaper.

Revision and Editing. Before any paper may be published, it must undergo revision and editing. To help with this process proofreading quickies i.e., three or four sentences lifted from student's papers focusing on punctuation, verb/noun/pronoun agreement, spelling or any grammar problem are reviewed daily. Sometimes a particularily troublesome spot will elicit several days work on grammar concept.

Each student keeps his own grammar chart which allows him to concentrate on any recurring problem. From this particular facet of the course a slide set on punctuation using the analogy of a train evolved, Grammar books appear, composed of dittoed material developed by each student. Exercises created by class members to hone a point are administered. When the material demands a specific rhetorical form, specific tone, students work it through together.

Publication. The fianl and yet paradoxically the beginning step is publication in the newspaper Easy Kriter. The publication is uncensored; a student publishes what he wishes, but a space for criticism is provided and the paper has wide circulation both on and off campus. No student may publish annonymously-every student must accept the responsiblity for his idea. He may, of course, respond to the criticism-an argument on abortion for example may go on for weeks. Each teacher publishes a brief explanation so that other classes may know what prompted the writing. Although the criticism often begins on a personal level-later criticism becomes objective, therefore, more effective. As students work with language, they begin to replace the evocative but ineffective "shit" with details that produced the comment-finally shit is a cop out employed when the author refuses to fill in the details. The paper is not the finished product, it is a teaching tool-since students learn printing does not make an article profound or even correct-critical thinking, the crying need of the student becomes mandatory. As the course progresses, the newspaper feeds the course. At the beginning writing is autobiographical truth, then a sensitive author draws back one step replacing the I with he or she. Finally pieces which began as a personal response produce objective papers which argue a point or criticize a value. I was particularily elated last week-we are in the last thros of the semester-when a student enquired, "May we discuss Easy Writers today?"

"Why yes," I replied.

He said, "Great, I'm going to tear an article apart."

Let's see how all of this works in practice.

The bell rang; time to begin. I addressed the group.

"Here every day for sixteen weeks you will be writers-professional writers because you will be writing for publication. We publish a weekly newspaper Easy Writers in which the best articles written each week are published. This newspaper goes to deans, couselors, professors, administrators all over Purdue's campus and to other universities that have requested copies. Anytime you want extra copies to send home or to friends just ask. As professional writers you will need to keep journals in which you record materials for possible future use-I call it mind rape. If the term is too strong, try something else. But do capture a moment, respond to an idea, blow your cool, write a poem, recall the past, but the truth I want to focus on

most is Word Truth; i.e., finding the exact word to communicate precisely the idea you have. Write everyday for at least ten minutes. We will be concerned with truth-yes, the personal experience; each of you has completed at least eighteen years of observing and recording in your mind. We will use that material. Also during this semester we will be observing and recording in many places at many times-in fact wherever you are. We think in pictures-before you have reached any conclusion, your mind had recorded the entire picture or may be a series of pictures. Don't record merely the conclusion; record the entire picture. Just transfer the mental picture to a word picture on paper. Because the exchange of sixteen minds is richer than one mind working alone, we will read to each other, discuss and criticize the ideas and writings. Everything you write is important. Keep it all in a portfolio. We will spend a lot of time together; I am always available to you. Call me any time an idea strikes if you care to. We will eat together, study together, attend events together, work together. We will learn to know each other through our writing. I promise you this will be the best class you have ever or will ever have. In addition you will surprise even yourself in your writing. For the next ten minutes we will write freely, fully and and everything that comes into the mind. Just let the hand holding the pen record what the mind dictates. Here you are complete master. Whatever you write will be important. Andonly those changes you sanction will ever be made. When you have an article ready for publishing, we'll do it."

And so another semester began. The next day we would read today's papers. Every class excited me anew. At the close of the hour, Jim stopped by to say he wanted to perfect his mechanics. "Good, I have a programmed approach you will find helpful. Let's do the tests first; no sense in working on things you already control." As he left the room. he motioned to his buddy. They would work on it together. The next week I would start "Operation Concentration" in which for one week the entire class would hammer away at mechanics. One day out of the depths of despair, searching for the right word to share an idea with her peers, Jackie appeared, Thesaurus in hand. "Show me how to use this," she demanded. The others were interested so we spent several days working through the Thesauruses the students had found somewhere. After we had discovered Hansberry's To Be Young Gifted and Black, Bonnie suggested to her classmates that they do some drama. The students did drama scripts-some vignettes based on Hansberry which we video taped.

Our VietNam vet appeared in class oneday, journal opened, face flushed. "I have something I want to read to the class," he demanded. My pleasure must have shown on my face. At first students had been reluctant to read their own work-to have a student demand to be heard excited me and I knew we had arrived-there would be no more timidity. So Joe read a three page account of a night patrol. He had written well and the topic was current; the students listened carefully. In the midst of high praise, a lone voice said, "But I wish you had shown

me your fear, instead of the buildings." That comment began a whole new line of thinking for Joe which in turn produced a much longer paper entitled "One Man Corps" which he published in Easy Writers.

Jim, with his big Afro, straight from the sidewalks of the Gary ghetto came to class one day announcing he had a paper to read. He glowed with Black pride; his paper was on Black Power. The language exploded into rhetoric, but the class heard him out. However, Debbie, from a deep Southern Indiana, Klu Klux Klan county, leaped to the attack. For a time the group was polarized but then someone demanded, "Yeah, Jim, that's cool, but you showed your conclusions, not the picture you had in your mind that made you reach your conclusion. Show us."

And our Italian (I thought he was Chicano) took up the challenge with a bona-fide report on his father's Pizza business with some ideas about the Mafia thrown in to thrill the class. Later we took a look at some names various groups are called-"Spic" for Puerto Rican, etc. Ed called home to find out what "wop" meant. He was surprised to know it meant "without papers' and was used with early Italian immigrants. Finally in defense of language and its uses, Russ wrote:

> In response to Ralph H. Tenetta:
>
> I do not think there was any unnecessary language in my article entitled, "Quiet Hours?" I wrote what I observed; nothing more and nothing less. I don't care if the language offended a few people because it is heard most every day and I see nothing wrong with it. I do no know why you say the use of this language is unnecessary. If a person is going to write "truth," he should write nothing but the truth. This is what I, along with the others in Easy Writers have done. I can't help it if it offends some people because it is virtually impossible to please everyone. Sure, there are more polite ways of getting ideas across but then you are taking the truth away and freedom of the author to express himself.
>
> Answering your last question, I have to say, "Yes, educated human beings require the use of this language to express themselves." Educated people learn to write by expressing themselves truthfully and honestly. There are people who refuse to express themselves and exercise their freedom to write what they see, hear, or feel because they have been taught through their lives that certain words are bad and obscene. I don't think any words are obscene. Most of us have been taught certain words are obscene but never were given reasons why.
>
> The English language along with literature is beautiful; so are the words which make up this language. Some words are more beautiful than others which makes it all right to say the more beautiful ones. The less beautiful words are constantly receiving threats to be eliminated by not being used. This is like killing all ugly people so there are nothing but

beautiful people. After this is done, there are still people who aren't as beautiful as others; and they, too, will be killed until there is only one person left. This works with words also, If you cut out the less beautiful words, you won't have a language left. I don't see any reason why a person can use a word and have it be called obscene.

Most everybody has his own idea of what beautiful is and most of them differ. What's beautiful to some people is ugly to others and I, along with others, can't please everyone, I write what I think is right.

-Russ Sattler

Some students endorsed Russ' idea; others rejected it. In further exploration of language we asked a Black man to read some Black poetry (Don L. Lee's), and the group did some role playing and script writing, using appropriate dialect-Spanish, Italian, Chinese . . .

A discussion on education led to the class's viewing a Video tape done on education by another English 100 class. "Hey, man, that's a bore. I like to be on the action."

"Yeah, why can't we do something that high school students can be in on?"

"Well, we really don't know that much, but I did some cadet teaching last summer in an open classroom system, That's where it's at."

"What's 'open classroom'?"

"Hey, I've got a book . . ."

As a result the students read widely from Farber to Moffet, to Commager to Cardinal Newman on education. Then by using the telecommunication system at Purdue, they were able to maintain a real discussion with high school students assembled at Hammond, Fort Wayne, and Westville.

Several of the students were struggling with grammar books because they were at the editing stage in papers they wanted published. They complained that they couldn't understand the grammar books; so the group wrote their own. The method was simple; record first the grammar rule. Then observe how you wrote the sentence; now correct. Finally, what technique did you find for remembering the next time? Incidentally, most of the students had memorized grammar rules which they could quote but found no correlation between the rule and the paper they were editing. The important part of the grammar book was, of course, the recording technique for remembering. Building from these techniques, the group created a filmstrip for future use by students having punctuation problems.

Rosemary undertook a study of premarital sex in the dorm:

Pre-marital sex may imply intercourse before marriage only with the person you plan to marry, intercourse with a person you love deeply but have no future plans of marriage, or various degrees of sex before marriage.

Situations I present will contain these various aspects. I have questioned Purdue students on campus and friends from East Chicago. Beliefs and situations have differed greatly. I am presenting a few of the individual situations to prove that pre-marital sex has different effects on individuals. I will often use the term conservative and liberal. I am defining conservative as someone who has been brought up with the notion that pre-marital sex is degrading, has a high moral code against pre-marital sex, or is worried about what friends or society would think of her if they were aware that she engaged in pre-marital sex. A liberal is a person who believes pre-marital sex is not morally wrong, or degrading, and would not become greatly influenced by what society or friends would say.

Deneen, a Black, conservative, Purdue student, explained to me her diea of pre-marital sex. She loved and worshipped Bill, a White, liberal Purdue student. After much hesitation, she engaged in pre-marital sex to prove her love for Bill. Because Deneen loved Dill, she had future plans of marriage, but Bill did not consider marriage in his future plans. Deneen and Bill had intercourse about once a week. After three months, Deneen discovered she was two months pregnant. She ran to Bill with the good news, but Bill begged Deneen to abort the baby. Deneen loved children. She cried to Bill, asking him to marry her. Bill refused. After a week, Bill convinced Deneen to have the abortion. Although she still did not approve, she aborted the baby. Deneen was placed in a mental institution for one year. The fact that Deneen was pregnant opened her eyes to the fact that she had engaged in pre-marital sex. She knew she was having intercourse, but didn't realize that she would have to face such awful consequences. Her actions were conflicting with her standards and morals, and she could not face the problem without psychological help.

Deneen did not think sex was drastically wrong, but the idea of her being pregnant and having to kill the child conflicted too severely with her views. Since Deneen wasn't whole-heartedly against pre-marital sex, she might have been well off today had she used a contraceptive. Subconciously Deneen might have been ashamed about having intercourse and didn't go to the doctor because of her shame. In this case, she should have waited until her beliefs changed before she engaged in pre-marital sex.

But look at Anna, a liberal Purdue student. Anna had been dating Dave for one month before she engaged in intercourse. She wasn't certain of a lasting relationship but knew that she loved Dave. She and Dave had no future plans of marriage, but weren't planning to end their relationship after the first intercourse either. Anna and Dave have been going steady for eight months now, and she has had no guilt feelings or conflicts with her standards about pre-marital sex. She informed me that she is regarded with a physical enjoyment from intercourse. Anna sincerely remarked, "After 'screwing!' I feel relaxed and satisfied. It's like I was hungry for food, but couldn't do anything. After I ate, I could work uninterrupted for hours." She once had a fear of becoming pregnant. After missing one period, Anne rushed to the doctor only to realize her system was off. Not willing to take a chance of pregnancy, Anna bought a year's supply of birth control pills. Anna and Dave have a physical as well as emotional attraction for each other. Providing Anna and Dave still love each other three years from now, they will marry.

Anna had no conflicting inner views about her actions and feelings; therefore, she had an exciting experience. I must agree with Duvall's idea that with the changing of sex taboos, "as long as the person believes that what he is doing is right, let him do so."[1]

Yet Rose, a Quaker on the Purdue Campus informed me that the biggest mistake she ever made was to engage in pre-marital sex. She dated Ron for one year, eight months before they began petting, and two years before engaging in intercourse. Rose only "gave in" to Ron to please him. Rose always felt guilty the few times they engaged in pre-marital sex (they are no longer dating because he's Pentecostal; religion divides.) She experienced no physical enjoyment whatsoever. In fact she hated the idea of intercourse. Everytime she had pre-marital sex with Ron, her beliefs that sex was nasty, wicked, degrading, and that women who participated in pre-marital sex were "ruined," surfaced. As a punishment from God, Rose worried that she might be pregnant or have a venereal disease. She considered suicide if either one of these tragedies occurred. Even today, which is two years since her last act of intercourse, she becomes upset when she thinks about how her actions conflicted with her standards. She is convinced she will never marry because no man wants a "ruined" woman.

Unless Rose changes her dieas, she will live the rest of her life not knowing the joy of an emotional, exciting sexual experience. An unemotional encounter with pre-marital sex has spoiled the whole idea.

This next situation is about Jane, a person I can't be quite sure leveled with me. I know Jane has been dating John since her freshman year in high school; so I asked of her experiences with pre-marital sex. "I don't have intercourse, because I want to be completely sure of a lasting relationship. I'll wait until I'm married." she replied.

"Isn't marriage really for security?" I asked her.

"Yes," As long as she believed a piece of paper kept her husband to herself, I wasn't going to change her mind. Knowing Jane since high school, I knew she held conservative views. The reason Jane didn't agree with me is because her conservative ideas would not let her accept her actions as reality. If she couldn't accept her actions, I could-not expect her to inform me of them--that would force her to face reality. If Jane has experienced pre-marital sex, the effect on her emotions is not great providing she can avoid reality. If she is repressing her thoughts, Jane may find herself emotionally upset, but that isn't for me to decide. If Jane is engaging in pre-marital sex, her shame and guilt feelings prevent her discussing her ideas. If Jane is not engaging in pre-marital sex, she is living up to her standards, and no conflict is involved. But like I said-I knew her before she came to Purdue.

I'm positive the following situation is truthful. I experienced it. Before I engaged in pre-marital sex, I believed, but not firmly, that sex before marriage would degrade me. My parents taught me that pre-marital sex was wrong. Until I was fifteen, I didn't question the morality of sex. By seventeen, my best friends were having pre-marital sex. I didn't condemn them for it, but rather listened to the enjoyment they received from the act. Thinking I wouldn't become involved with sex for years, I didn't give pre-marital sex much thought. I met Chic. Not knowing he was the "perfect" guy, I engaged in pre-marital sex anyway--I loved him. Feeling guilty for going against my standards, I cried. My guilt hindered me from enjoying the act. As a month progressed, I no longer felt guilty and shameful. I looked at sex as being a communicable enjoyment. Because I lost my inhibitions to a favorable experience, my situation can be expressed in the following words:

> The attitude of respect[illegible] people toward sex has almost reversed itself in a relatively short time. When people shift so rapidly in matters which they are so strongly involved emotionally, many will inevitable experience strong feelings of guilt. We need not be ashamed of such feelings. Changing our ideas is often like having our teeth straightened; it hurts. On the other hand, entering previously forbidden territory is exciting. In consequence, much of the discussion of sex combines both guilt and glee.

The names in the previous situations are fictitious, but the situations are real. After questioning these people, I conclude that pre-marital sex can be either advantageous, depending upon the individual as well as the situation.

-Rosemary Martinak

When Rosemary had finished reading her paper our Black, Pentacostal minister and quiet little Catholic Maria took up the fight for chastity and marriage. Oddly enough this particular discussion moved into abortion and then we had Pentacostal minister and Catholic against the class. When the class met for their next monthly dinner at my house to read journals to each other, the discussion began all over again. By this time the group had worked out some guidelines for peer criticism and some ideas for scoping so the many sides of an idea would be viewed. After the air cleared, several students suggested how papers could grow from the journal entries. Surprisingly enough the journal entries showed the students had already begun to have second thoughts about pre-marital sex and abortion. We decided to invite a psychologist and sociologist to out next meeting, just to sit in on the discussion. As aside-once the students were caught up in showing how they arrived at conclusions, they began to demonstrate a bit more ability in diagnosing other people's writings.

About this time the group began looking for definitions. Someone, I think Henry, suggested he bring some records which defined "soul." After he had played them, Shirley brought her guitar to interpret rock for us. Inspired by the music two boys collaborated on a poem which Jim finally put together for us.

...MUSIC IS silence

A buzzing bee,
A cawing crow,
A flapping fly,
A chirping bird...MUSIC IS silence
A piercing trumpet,
A shrieking piccolo,
A smooth saxaphone,
A mellow viola...MUSIC IS silence

A blasting jackhammer,
A burning chainsaw,
A slamming sledgehammer.
A repeating alarm...MUSIC IS silence
A ticking clock,
A busy signal,
A ringing alarm,
A police siren...MUSIC IS silence

A walking man,
A galloping horse,
A jumping grasshopper,
A soaring eagle...MUSIC IS silence
A blowing wind,
A crackling thunderstorm,
A whirling tornado,
A freezing day...MUSIC IS silence

A sizzling steak,
A pop of popcorn,
A boiling lobster,
A deep-fried french fry...MUSIC IS silence
Quiet is silence,
Silence is quiet,
...MUSIC IS silence

-James L. Bender

The group wrote and read their responses to all of this; they became concerned with the art work Janet had done in response to the definition of soul. This led us to look at the film The Reality of Karel Appel. Immediately the students wanted to create a reality in paint; we used a creative art room. Melvin did the inside of a well-formed head lighted with various colors; beside this he painted a greyish mass resembling pictures of brains like one sees in biology books. The task then was to create the same effect with words and share both with the group for comment. Melvin wrote:

COLORS

I drew what I saw and thought
of you
I drew what I saw and it looked
like you.
Your mind, my mind-our big, and small
heads--

I looked at you, and saw the colors of
your face, and how it reacts with
my mind and your taste.

I thought of your mama and daddy
and how they put visions
in your mind that became
colors

Colors of education, colors of your success,
Colors of your wants, the colors of the
things you like and I don't.

My head turns to you and I ask,
"What should I do?"

And with your colors nearly established
you tell me what you'd do.

My head floats, round and round and
round, and wonders on your
ideal, and I find I don't fit
in the stuff you dig.

I'm moving and living the life fast, exploring
the colors; colors of your
Red
and all the wickedness in your mind
from your head,
The Yellow
yes, the color which makes you
think, you're so, so
mellow
And Black
the color of darkness that covers the shade
of you making me in your
reality.

In your mind I searched;
you looked and saw my head
making the colors of your
thoughts in my confused
little brain.

-Melvin Milon

Alex Haley visited Purdue to review his forthcoming book Roots in which he traces his ancestry to an African tribe through the sounds he heard as a child. We attended en masse; afterwards we were invited to the Black Cultural Center to examine a Black art exhibit. About the same time we looked at a film on an American Indian festival shown at the International House. The students began to write about "di ng* inside me." Memesio read a paper he put together, contrasting the Chicano Movement (peaceful) and the Brown Berets (Militant). When he began talking about the exploitation of the Chicano by the Blacks in Gary and the Whites at Purdue, the group insisted he record the facts. We read Montoya and Piri Thomas and went to see Nicolas Kanalles Teatro Desengano del Pueblo. Shu * found music inside of

* Original type not clear

herself, while Bina found love. But the group had been captivated with Nemesio and his talk of Atzlan; as a result, a political science professor and an anthropologist came to sit in our discussion, adding a new dimension to everyone's, including Nemesio's thought.

Pete, who was the computer nut of the group, digging inside himself found precision and orderless induced by his captain, businessman father. He spent many hours at the computer center trying to get his programs to run. Writing of his frustrations and his observations, he aroused the interests of the group. Finally the students went with him to spend an evening observing and recording impressions of a computer center. Several members began a project to put some phases of grammar control on computer cards. This particular project has not been completed. However the group did write up a series of ideas for possible work by another group. And Pete handed in the final entries of his journal on computer cards-he included the print-outs for me.

While the class moves along, so do the other classes and every week the newspaper Easy Writers comes out. The students had been criticizing each other's ideas and writing across classes. Toward the end of the semester Pearlie Shields, a Black who had tried for several years to get into Purdue, published her article:

AN EVENT THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Saturday, June 24th at 9:34 p.m. Carolyn Renay was born. This moment brought about the most framatic change my life had ever encountered. Weighing barely 3½ pounds and screaming like a two year old, my greates responsibility had arrived. With shiny black hair, unnaturally straight, hanging around her ears, I saw the Indian features of my grandmother, which would soon change to my grandfather's all black characteristics. Like most mothers, it was my first real moment of pride and concern-pride because I had seen, felt and given birth to the world's most precious gem, a small bundle of love, a human being. And like most mothers I looked at her body for something to be concerned about. But I was lucky my concern wasn't necessary. Being a former nurse's aide I should have known better; but this was my baby, not my patient. Most newborn whites are a reddish color, and the newborn blacks? Well, when I saw my baby's bottom I screamed, "Oh, my God, my baby is navy blue." The doctor laughed hysterically and assured me my baby would be my beautiful color within hours . . . . . (See p. 7 Since you Asked Me.)

My attitude toward the world and its environment changed. Before Renay was born, I had traveled by train from Alabama to Boston. I slept and read all the way. The next trip was Renay's first train ride. This time

it was an adventure. Between Indiana and Alabama I answered at least fifty questions. My two-year-old had a favorite one, "Mommie, what's that?" I didn't know I was such a good teacher. The who, what, and why took a lot of explaining.

For the first time in my life all of nature's wonders became important to me. Every existing thing was a part of life and had a purpose for being here. Things I enjoyed and got a kick from before became a threat to my baby's life, as well as to her social and emotional development. Riding in fast cars was one of my greatest kicks. When Renay was three years old, I gave her a tricycle. Warning her about riding in the street took me back to a New Year's Eve in Boston. I knew how careless, selfish, and daring some drivers are. I used to ride with the worst of them. Between Boston and Hartford we tried to break our own records. And the worst of it is we never got caught. The night of New Year's Eve we were in Hartford, and we wanted to celebrate the stroke of midnight in Boston. With horns blowing and screeching wheels we broke the sound barrier... except one; sirens, we were being followed. Luckily we outsmarted the boys in the blue and white. Our escape was a hospital emergency entrance. We pulled in out of sight and within seconds the cops shot by blowing their sirens and looking stern. We pulled out behind them . . blowing ours. We made good time in that chase. Never once did I or the others stop to think of a child, a two-year-old running after a ball, or crossing the street.

Watching Renay ride her tricycle I felt a little sick. I could have been responsible for wiping the smile off a little girl's face just like hers. I knew it was up to me to protect her.

There are so many people like I used to be, people who don't care, who live dangerously for their own selfish kicks. People don't stop to think until it's too late. But if they are lucky the way I was, something precious like a child might make them take a better look.

-Pearlie Shields

The class went through Pearlie's work finding all the elements of good writing-tension, metaphoric language, comparison/contrast, definition, persuasion, use of details and natural language. Spurred on by Pearlie's work, my students found writings of their own, dissected them carefully and discovered in writing naturally and fully, they too had incorporated many elements of good writing. One outgrowth of this experience was a series of extended metaphors. Henry did: "My grandmother is like Cary Residence Hall," and Mel saw Chicago as a "Spider's Web." I admit some of the metaphors rivaled Donne's.

Toward the end of the semester, members of each class met to plan the awards banquet at which cash awards would be given to the best papers written during the semester and plans were laid for the publication of a booklet of the very best. During the semester the teachers met weekly to share ideas, techniques and listen to various authorities, an in-service-training program.

Actually the course has nothing new to add to the teaching of writing; it is merely applying what we have known for a very long time. The students have created their own world, and in so doing have found potential they never knew existed. Nothing is superimposed; students generate the program; but everything must result in a writing experience. The students work harder than they have ever worked before, but they write these evaluations:

> "Evolution is the process of growth or development. English 100 is the beginning of that growth within me. What's it all about? Words."
>
> -Bob Covey

> "My feelings about English 100? Great! This class helped me understand myself better as a young black man and as a Purdue University student."
>
> -Charles Rice

> "This is not a course; this is a way of life."
>
> -Greg Wiltrout

> "This course not only teaches English, but it aids each individual to know himself and his own abilities better."
>
> -bonnie biggs

And teachers say the same-good things can happen when students and teachers turn on to writing.

Liliane González
Purdue University
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